

PRINCIPLE TWO: QUALITY PUBLIC REALM & AMENITIES

THE IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY PUBLIC SPACES



The best cities and neighborhoods in the world are defined by their great public spaces. A quality public realm creates a “sense of place” and serves as the living room of a community. Public community life provides vibrancy to the neighborhood center. Public spaces designed to encourage activities ranging from public gatherings to casual people watching reinforce this vitality, as well as transit use and pedestrian movement.

Great public spaces, such as Eastern Market, attract local and regional activities and are fun and pleasant places to be.

CONCEPTS

A quality public realm...

- Provides a public focus and gathering space for the neighborhood.
- Includes pedestrian pathways, village greens, neighborhood parks, urban squares, and transit plazas.
- Is directly connected to public streets, residential areas and retail uses.
- Radiates from transit stops to promote pedestrian activity.
- Emphasizes elements that are pedestrian-oriented, not auto-dominated.

GUIDELINES

A. Provide or enhance public spaces at neighborhood centers to accommodate a variety of community activities.

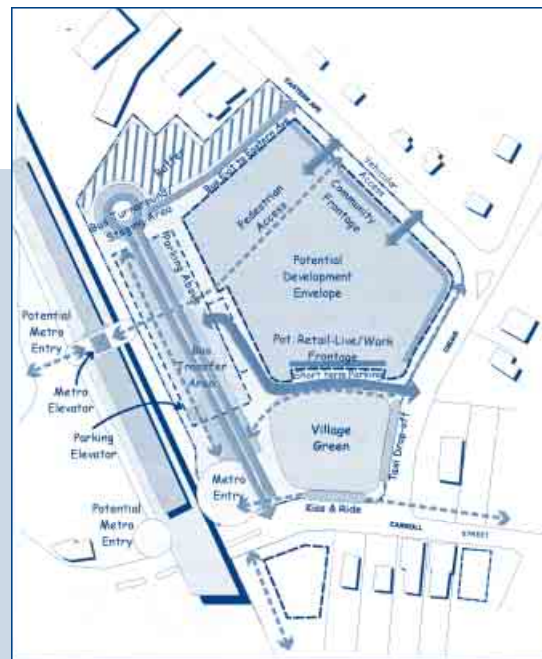
- Provide public plazas, wide sidewalks, or small parks that serve as a focus for community activities and transit use.
- Urban squares or parks at transit should be appropriately-scaled to fit surrounding densities, land uses, and daily activities.
- Use public spaces and plazas at major transit stops as the connector between rail and bus systems and the pedestrian pathway system.



Public spaces provide venues for neighborhood festivals and express neighborhood character.

Source: Latino Economic Development Corporation

- Encourage an active environment at neighborhood parks as safe places for children to play and neighbors to visit.
- Stimulate a vibrant pedestrian street life with sidewalks that organize several everyday functions such as shopping, child care, dry cleaning or simply catching the bus within an inviting and attractive environment.
- Encourage active use of public space by providing or encouraging: street furniture; outdoor cafes and dining; venues for festivals and community events; porches; community events.



Appropriately sized neighborhood parks bordered by diverse uses provide an active and interesting place for community such as the planned Village Green at the Takoma Station.

B. Establish a system of public space elements that promote a sense of place, pedestrian traffic, economic investment and a positive neighborhood image.

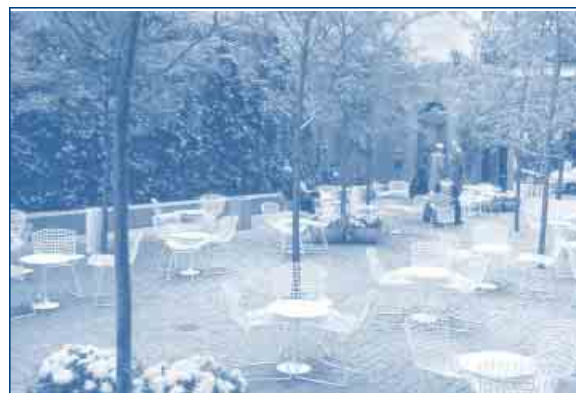
- Create access to destinations via sidewalks that support casual public activity, walking and transit use.
- Define quality public spaces with trees. Trees and landscaping create a buffer from traffic, while providing shade and comfortable gathering places.
- Promote a safe evening environment with pedestrian-scale lighting that contributes to an attractive neighborhood character and image.
- Encourage developments that build to the property line to create a consistent edge or "street wall" that defines the public space.



Neighborhood landmarks like the "Big Chair" in Anacostia, are a common meeting place and promote neighborhood identity and history.



A quality public realm supports retail, pedestrian and bicycle traffic, and casual visiting that are an essential component of a safe and attractive neighborhood.
Source: Washington Regional Network



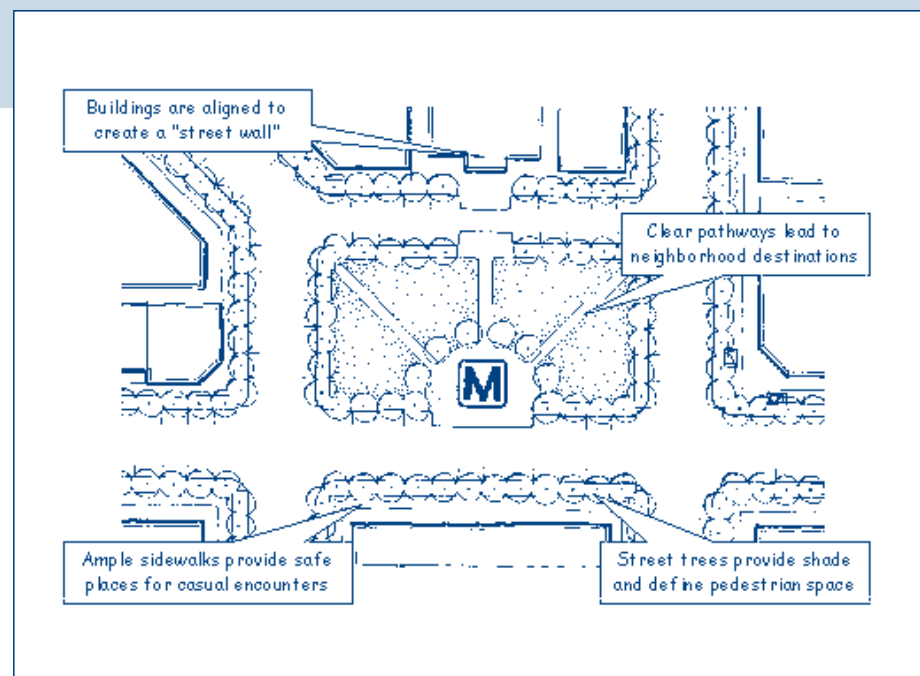
Paley Park in New York City is a small urban park that provides flexible space for community gathering, chess games, eating, and visiting.



Sidewalks are flexible public spaces that can simultaneously be used for pedestrian travel, commercial activity, and community gathering places.

C. Improve transit facility amenities that enhance use and neighborhood character.

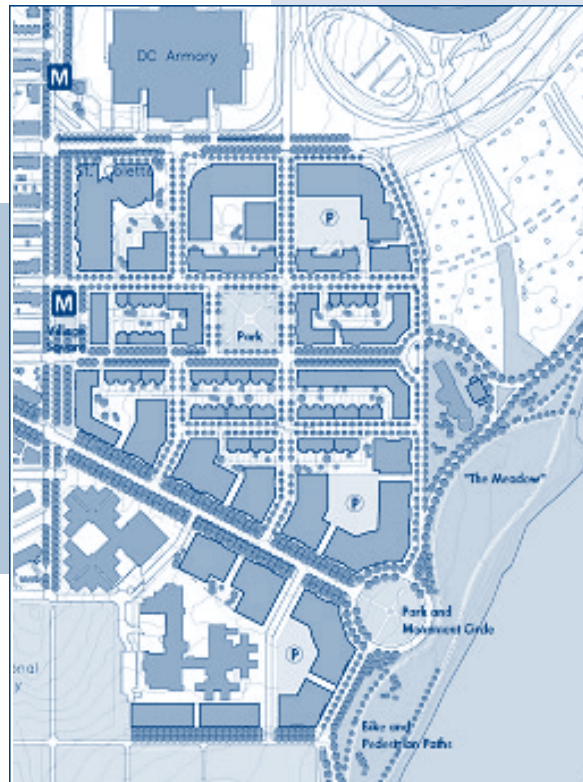
- Bus stop improvements may include:
 - Expanded signage
 - Benches
 - Information kiosks
 - Shelters
 - Public Art
- Rail Station improvements may include :
 - Plaza and landscaping improvements
 - Information kiosks
 - Public Art



D. Integrate elements of the public realm into plans for transit-oriented development.

- Develop a plan for future public spaces and amenities, such as trees, lighting and store-front design, appropriate to each neighborhood.
- Incorporate improvements to the public realm into private transit-oriented projects.
- Direct public investment to fund public space improvements and attract private sector investment.

Private development, such as the proposed "Ellington" at U Street, contribute to an active public realm by including ground-floor retail, outdoor seating, and quality architecture.
Source: Dontelli & Klein



PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN THE PUBLIC REALM

Negotiating project requirements with developers is one way to provide public space amenities. Transit oriented development can be facilitated through special zoning regulations or through the Planned Unit Development (PUD) process. The PUD process gives the developer greater flexibility in meeting zoning requirements. In return, the developer is expected to provide a public amenity proportional to the flexibility granted. Communities may negotiate for parks, plazas, or other improvements such as landscaping. For example, a developer may negotiate an increase in floor area or building height in exchange for providing sidewalk improvements or a public plaza.

The plan for the Hill East Waterfront reintroduces a traditional grid; wide, tree-lined streets; and a town square at the metro station to encourage the use of transit.
Source: EEK Architects